

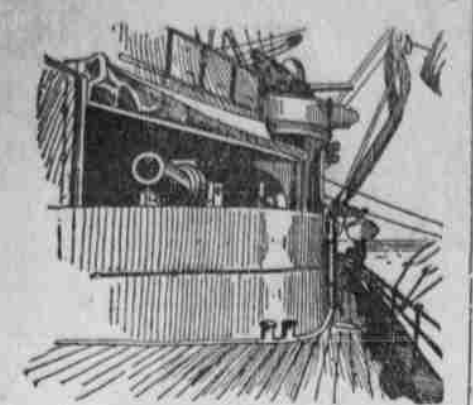
GERMANY'S NEW NAVY.

The Naval Resources of the Empire Not to Be Despised.

Quick-Firing Guns of Large Caliber More Than Make Up the Difference in the Number of Ships of Other Countries.

(Special Berlin Letter.)

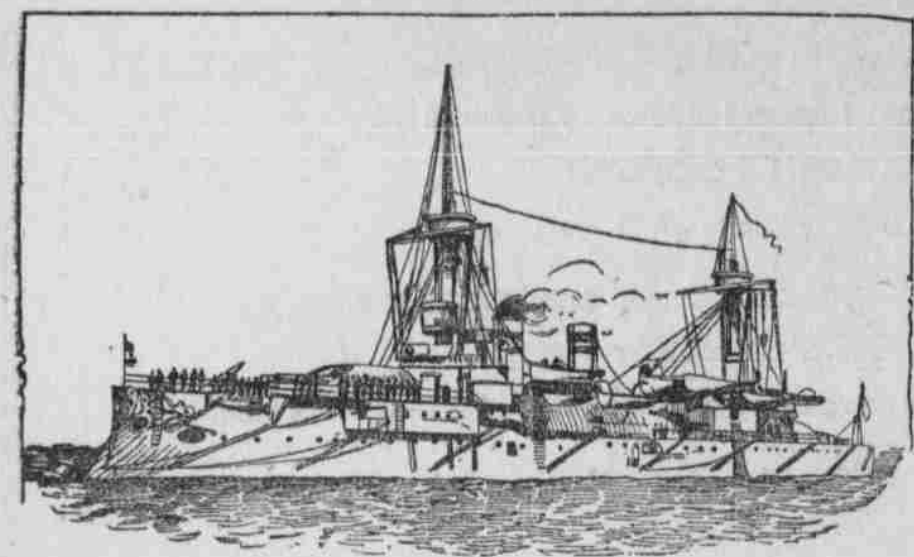
Of the naval powers of consequence Germany is the youngest. Practically, too, the German navy is untried and untested. The further fact that Germany is a poor country, when compared with France, England or the United States, and that she is financially unable to support, without seriously crippling herself, the double burden of taxation which the maintenance of her matchless army



CASEMATE GUN ON CRUISER SACHSEN.

and of a navy of first-class dimensions would necessitate, has bred the opinion generally held, even by the majority of the German press and people, that the German navy is of not much account, and hardly able to make a decent showing, if the need should ever arise.

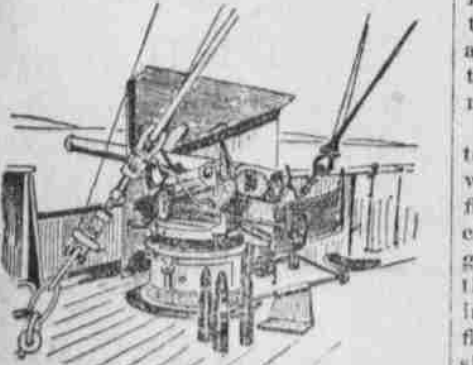
This opinion, however, is an erroneous one. It is true that as to size the German navy occupies the fifth place, being outdone in this respect by England, France, Russia and Italy, and only slightly exceeding—at this hour—that of the United States, whereas it is certain that, in conformity with the naval plan and the naval resources fixed under the present administration, the United States will exceed, in the size and fighting quality of her navy, Germany ten years hence. But it is just



NEW GERMAN IRONCLAD WOERTH.

as certain that Italy will drop behind with each recurring year, her financial embarrassment rendering it impossible for her to keep up the size of her navy on the present scale. As to the Russian navy, it is also, practically, an unknown and untested factor, and marine experts declare to-day that much of Russia's naval strength, like that of her army, exists only on paper.

Be that as it may, I in this instance merely wish to emphasize the fact that the German navy is no mean opponent. At the Kiel naval demonstration, in June, 1895, I heard an experienced and impartial American naval commander express himself to the effect that in point of readiness, in point of admirable discipline and actual fighting power, the German navy of to-day comes, in his opinion, in the second rank—directly behind England. Since then several occasions have arisen which tried the mettle of the German navy, or at least vessels and crews forming part of it, and in each case the German vessels and their crews



QUICK-FIRING NAVAL GUN.

have borne themselves gallantly and worthily. I refer more particularly to the loss of the Itis in Chinese waters, the little crew meeting its doom with cheers for their emperor and the singing in chorus of a patriotic hymn. Wherever the German navy forcibly interfered during the past 15 years, it did so efficiently, unflinchingly, and in a spirit of Spartan bravery.

It is known that the German emperor has the ambition of evolving a German navy of such unexceptionable quality, and of such fine fighting powers as did his grandfather with the German army. This, in fact, is the pet idea of William II., and hardly a day passes when he does not find time and opportunity to do something for his young navy—examining new models in ordnance or equipment, in some constructive part or machinery. He has so zealously devoted himself to the task of becoming a naval expert, both theoretically and practically, ever since he ascended the throne, that he has, according to the statements of all the German, English, French, Russian and

American naval officers who have met him, really attained his goal.

There is no ruler of the present day who is a match for him in this respect. Nothing new and interesting in naval things escapes his keen eye and shrewd attention. Just to cite a point in illustration, I may say that the emperor was one of the first to discern the great importance of Capt. Mahan's (U. S. N.) books on the influence of navies on national greatness, and that he at once carefully studied these books and had copies of them incorporated in the libraries of the naval academies and schools throughout Germany. It is a further proof of the great virtue he attaches to the growing prestige of his navy that he made his only brother, Prince Henry, adopt the naval career, and that, in the course of time, a number of German princes will follow suit in this respect, for some younger members of several reigning houses in Germany—those of Baden, Mecklenburg and Oldenburg, for instance—are now serving as naval cadets, and two of the emperor's own sons are intended to enter the navy.

Whether the emperor will succeed in realizing all his naval plans, at least so far as size of the navy is concerned, remains to be seen. Probably he will have to defer a part of them, for to carry them out now, at a time when the military budget is becoming larger each year, would place an almost unbearable burden of taxation on the already tax-ridden German people. But in the end he will doubtless succeed in the main. The German war vessels of the latest type, the ironclads of the Goerth and Sachsen class, are certainly marvels of mechanical ingenuity and monsters in formidable fighting capacity. The casemate guns, with which the vessels of the class to which the ironclad Sachsen belongs are practically armed, are said to be beyond anything of the kind on other vessels. But the chief improvement now decided upon for the German navy, their being supplied with quick-firing guns of a new and unrivaled pattern, is of even vaster importance.

At the Krupp works in Essen, where experiments are being made all the time, a foreman in the ordnance department, Kruppe by name, made the invention and the multimillionaire owner of the establishment purchased this invention of his outright. Not many weeks ago the emperor visited the Krupp

works at the special invitation of the owner, and afterwards witnessed the tests made on a large scale with those new quick-firing guns on the enormous shooting territory of Meppen, near Essen. These practical tests occupied one whole day and the forenoon of the succeeding one, and they were successful beyond anything the emperor had imagined. The great need not only of the German navy but of all navies of the present day had been to make quick-firing guns of a caliber large enough to give the projectiles that amount of destructive, penetrative power necessary in a naval engagement between vessels of large and medium size. Such genius had not existed thus far. Technical difficulties which it seemed impossible to overcome had prevented the construction as well as the placing of them on board ship. Beyond the ten and twelve centimeter caliber none of these quick-firing guns could apparently be safely made. On the shooting territory of Meppen this fall, however, Krupp produced quick-firing guns of 15, 18, 21 and 24 centimeter caliber, and the work they did was so magnificent and exact as to earn the enthusiastic encomiums of the imperial eyewitnesses.

An arrangement has now been entered into with Krupp, by the terms of which he will manufacture these quick-firing guns for the German navy exclusively during a term of years, thus giving Germany an important start over the other navies of the world. (A specimen of this new type of German quick-firing guns, with projectiles to match, is shown in an accompanying illustration.) Orders to the tune of 20,000,000 marks were at once placed with Krupp, and additional sums will be voted by the reichstag during the next five years, for the emperor means to arm all his navy with the new quick-firers. Naval experts claim that the increase in fighting power during engagements or bombardments given German war vessels by this new arrangement will be double that which it hitherto was, and that a vessel armed with the 18 or 21 centimeter, quick-firing guns will be in a position to sink or cripple a vessel twice its size armed with other guns.

Of course, all this is as yet only theory—it remains to be seen whether the practice will agree with it. There will doubtless come occasions in the near future when German vessels will be able to test their new guns, for with large colonies in Africa and Australasia to protect, and with difficulties arising in far-away portions of the world, in China, the Philippines, Cuba, etc., requiring often the shot-and-shell kind of argument to settle, it is to be expected that the opportunity will not be lacking very long.

WOLF VON SCHIERBRAND.

FACTS ABOUT ICELAND.

A Country Full of Quaint Interest to the Traveler.

It is Not a Region of Perpetual Snow, Tempered by Polar Breezes and Rain—A Happy and Honest People.

(Special Letter.)

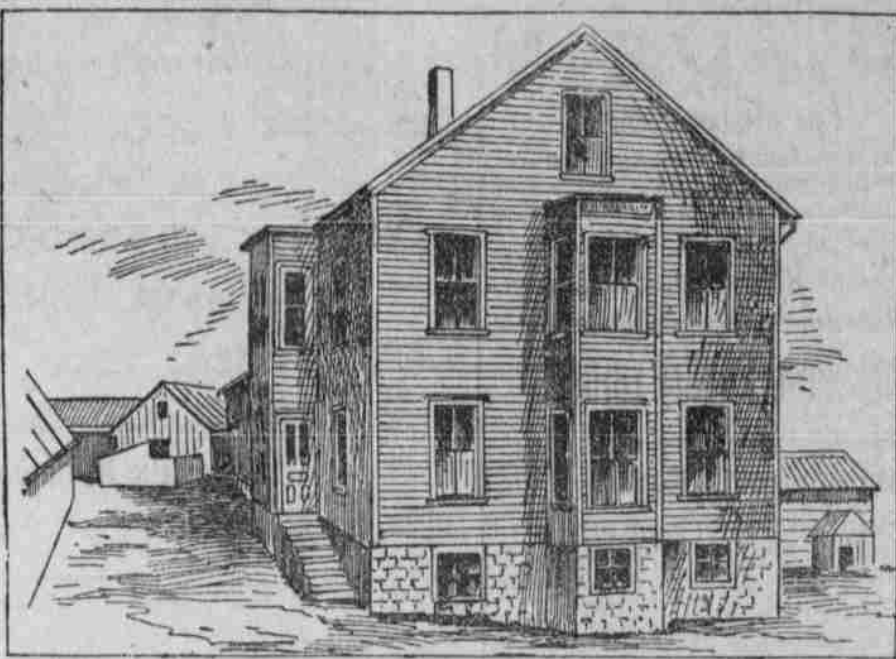
During this winter season of snow and ice, when one finds it difficult to determine whether the winter sports and exhilarating drafts recommended the season to his favor, or whether the discomforts the rough Boreas brings outweigh the delights, the people of Iceland are almost in the very midst of their long dreary winter.

Very little is generally known about this island of the northern sea, which, though it is looked upon by most people who condescend to give it a thought as the last corner of existence, has much to recommend it. That little ice-bound spot of the polar regions has a cleaner history than any other country on the globe, and its inhabitants are the purest race of people in the world.

The island lies in the North Atlantic ocean, immediately south of the polar circle. It is 250 miles from Greenland, 500 miles from the north of Scotland, and 600 miles from Norway. At its greatest length it measures 300 miles, and its maximum breadth is 200 miles. Thus, with a modern steam railway train, an excursion could be made over its entire length in 24 hours, and an American business man would not have to take many "days off" to "do" the island complete. However, there are neither railroad trains nor Americans in Iceland.

The area is estimated at 40,300 square miles. The geological formation of the island is volcanic, and from an elevated tableland in the interior the surface slopes to the coast on the north and south. Rugged and desolate lava tracts extend along the southern and eastern coasts. The northwest peninsula is broken by numerous narrow fjords, which are divided by high and narrow mountain ridges, seldom less than 2,000 feet above the level of the sea.

As frequent and furious as the eruptions of Hecula and Katla have been, and



HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS AT REYKJAVIK.

though Geyser has spit forth from his raging depths volumes of hot water, the Icelanders appear to be listless of the past, and indifferent as to the future. The most recent volcanic outbreak occurred in 1875, when from the outliers of the Vatnajökull, fine volcanic dust was discharged in great quantities, some of it being carried as far as Norway. The most disastrous eruption on record took place in 1783, near Skaptarjökull. Two principal lava streams, 40 and 50 miles in length, and from 12 to 15 miles wide, swept over the land like great demons of destruction.

Stock raising, fishing, knitting and the weaving of wool are the principal occupations. Agriculture is confined almost entirely to the home garden. All groceries, spirits, tobacco and building materials are imported.

The climate is not so severe as would be imagined from the latitude. The winter really continues for eight months, but is not generally more severe than the winters in Denmark. It is rather the protractedness and the darkness at midnight, lasting for six weeks, that makes it most unpleasant. For nearly 24 hours at midnight the sun never rises above the horizon, and during the whole of the six dark weeks the light is never stronger than a dull twilight. Indoor work, such as knitting, tool making, weaving, embroidery, etc., fills up the long winter, and diversion is found in family gatherings about a reader, who recites some of the masterpieces of Scandinavian literature.

The brief summer is bright and sunny, and like a perpetual springtime, when one can easily go without wraps. Day reigns absolutely for one week, and there is no night for six weeks. Iceland is subject to the king of Denmark, who shares the legislative power with the althing, an assembly of 34 members (30 being elected by household suffrage, and six by the king), which convenes every second year, in two divisions. Reykjavik, the capital and metropolis of the island, has about 4,000 inhabitants. The next towns in size are settlements of from 50 to 600 souls. The women have full suffrage rights, and when they marry their husbands take their names.

The Episcopal Lutheran is the church of the island. The sanctuaries in use are those used centuries ago, when Catholicism was the universal religion. The bishop is appointed by the king, and there are 142 assisting clergymen. There is not a wealthy man in all Iceland; nor are there the very poor which crowd the slums of American cities. The state in Iceland is more nearly that of socialism than anywhere else on the globe. If a man has not the means to procure necessities for

his family, his neighbors feel in duty bound not merely to ask him to accept a portion of their fuel, food and clothing, but to carry to him what they can spare.

Robberies are unknown, except in cases where the offense has been committed by foreign sailors. One could safely travel undisturbed through the mountains, along the sea coast, or in the towns, with a bag of coin on his shoulder. Only one murder has been committed in the past century, and that one—about three years ago—caused a commotion that extended over the whole country. Two men constitute the police force of Iceland. Both are stationed at Reykjavik.

The average Icelandic home has 1½ stories, and is built of a layer of turf and a lining of timber. Churches, schools, dwellings and government buildings are alike plain and modestly furnished. No railroads have yet been built, and there is only one wheeled vehicle in the country. That was brought home from England by one Icelandic who went to Britain on some business a few years ago. He and his ordinary little "buggy" are the wonders of the island. All travel is accomplished on pony-back.

A lady's saddle resembles a low-backed arm chair, and is decorated according to the taste and means of the possessor. All wares are dragged across country—a means of transportation so difficult that family moving is seldom attempted. It is impossible for country people to get any building timber or to have heavy articles of furniture.

The power of the press is felt in that primitive land. In Reykjavik there are three newspapers—(two of them issued weekly and one semi-weekly)—in Isafjord, one; in Seydisfjord, one, and one in Akureyri. A woman's pen has never yet touched one of them, and a daily issue is considered an impossibility.

The Icelanders have long been famous for their education and learning, and it is no exaggeration to say that nowhere else in the world is there to be found such learning among the poorest. This, however, only applies, generally, to the men. Boys are taught very early to "read, write and cipher," and even among the peasantry there is a knowledge of the sciences and languages. A few elementary schools have recently

been established, and at Reykjavik there is for general and classical education a college with a faculty of seven or more, and over 100 students.

It is very different with the girls! At about three years of age they are taught to knit, weave and sew. To sleep this line of work, or tend the sheep day after day in the lonely pastures, is their common lot. The mother's limited knowledge is imparted to her daughter, and at seven her tutelage has ended.

A needed reform in this direction has recently sprung from an odd circumstance. An English missionary, while traveling across the island, observed that the edition of the Holy Bible was about exhausted, and that the country afforded neither the means nor facilities for replenishing. On his return to London he reported the case to the London Tract society. Subsequently a letter was sent to the bishop at Reykjavik, offering to issue, free, a new edition of the Bible if he (the bishop) would arrange for the revision of the work. Accordingly, Eriks Magnusson, a member of the clergy, was sent to England to look after the matter. That man is now professor of Icelandic and librarian at the university at Cambridge, and his good little wife, Mrs. Sigrid Magnusson, has labored for the elevation of girls in her own country. While in Cambridge with her husband, she thought constantly of her home, and herself drew the plans of a school, "Vina Minni," which was, in 1890, built in Norway, and in sections transported during the summer season, to Reykjavik. Here it was put up on a piece of ground left to the madame by her mother.

The bishop of Iceland opened the high school for girls, "Vina Minni," in Reykjavik, Iceland, in October, 1891. The school was started with 15 girls. The subjects taught are the following: Tailoring, four days a week, from ten till two; Sloyd, Icelandic language and literature, English, arithmetic, writing, geography, history, Danish and singing. Besides those ten subjects, cooking is taught from twelve to two, two girls each week leaving class at 12 for the kitchen.

The mental work is carried on from four to seven; from 8 to 9:30, lessons are prepared. They have calisthenics half an hour daily, and half an hour's walk twice a day. When 1½ hours are not required for study, they are taught plain or fancy needlework. The girls are not received under 14 years. By this time they have been confirmed by the clergy.

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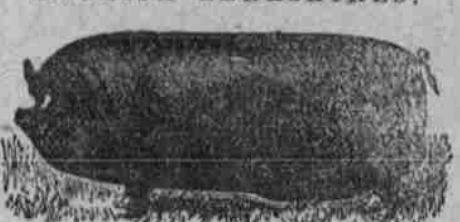
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